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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000927

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SUBJECT: IRAQI PM CHIEF OF STAFF DISCUSSES MINISTERIAL
CONFERENCE, DYNCORP BAN

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel Speckhard per 1.4 (b) and (d)

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[¶1.](#) (C) SUMMARY: In a March 12 meeting with PM Chief of Staff Tariq Abdullah, the Charge urged the PM's office to continue to press for de-Baathification reform and movement on the hydrocarbons law. He congratulated the PM's office on the successful Neighbors Conference and stressed the importance of moving forward with the ministerial level event. Abdullah told the Charge that the GOI wanted the next event to be held in Iraq, and insisted that it could not take place in an Arab or neighboring country. Abdullah confirmed that the PM's office had requested an extension to the State of Emergency, and was unsure why it had not been on the CoR agenda that day. Abdullah also confirmed that the PM had decided to ban all DynCorp employees from Iraq based on their alleged involvement in a high profile jailbreak last year. Abdullah expressed desire for a closer relationship with Washington, and asked the Charge to help facilitate a US visit to enhance ties between the PM's office and USG officials. END SUMMARY.

Charge Urges Continued Support for Key Legislation

[¶2.](#) (C) The Charge noted that the Ambassador had met with the PM, VPs and other political leaders before departing for the US, and that there had been movement towards agreement on a Presidency Council compromise de-Baathification draft law. Abdullah said that although the PM had met with VP Adil Abdel Mehdi before Mehdi left for the US, he had not yet heard anything from the PM on the status of the de-Baathification compromise draft. The Charge stated that the USG would appreciate the PM's support in pushing the draft forward and urged Abdullah to follow-up on the issue.

[¶3.](#) (C) The Charge praised GOI efforts to move forward with hydrocarbons legislation, congratulating the PM's office on its role in passing a framework through the Council of Ministers. He cautioned that there was still more to be done, noting that the PM's active support was still required to ensure that the bill maintained momentum.

Neighbors Conference, Looking Ahead to Ministerial

[¶4.](#) (C) The Charge congratulated the GOI on hosting the successful Neighbors Conference, noting that the USG was very pleased with the results. He acknowledged the GOI desire to have the next conference in Baghdad, but said that ministerial participation would difficult under those circumstances. Abdullah replied that if there were security concerns about holding the conference in Baghdad, it could be held in another Iraqi city, perhaps Erbil or Sulaymaniyah.

The Charge said that the US had no objection to such an arrangement, but expressed concern that other participants had reservations about any ministerial level event in Iraq, and the issue of location could become an excuse to delay the meeting indefinitely. Abdullah stated that the GOI believed that the conference would have little value if not held in Iraq.

15. (C) The Charge asked that the PM reconsider his position, highlighting the importance of dialogue and cooperation on Iraq issues, rather than the actual location of such talks. Abdullah said that world leaders, including President Bush and UK PM Blair, had safely visited Iraq without incident and said that the problem was with the Arab countries, some of which had offered to host the meeting. Abdullah insisted that the conference could not take place in any Arab or neighboring country. The Charge urged the GOI to begin working on getting agreement for a location amongst the participants.

State of Emergency Extension

16. (C) On the issue of the status of the State of Emergency extension, which was last extended on January 23 and has since lapsed, Abdullah said that the PM had sent the paperwork requesting the extension to Minister of State for CoR Affairs Safa Al-Safi "some time ago." The Charge noted that although the CoR had quorum at the March 12 opening session, the extension was not addressed and urged the PM's office to follow-up with Al-Safi on their request (Note: the extension was passed by the CoR on March 13. End Note.).

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DynCorp Accused of Jailbreak, Barred from Iraq

17. (C) The Charge expressed concern at a recent decision from the PM's office to deny entry visas to DynCorp employees in Iraq, which was reportedly based on allegations that DynCorp had helped former Minister of Electricity Ayham Al-Sammaraie to escape from jail and flee Iraq. The Charge explained that neither DynCorp nor Embassy officials had received prior notice of the decision, which affects almost 1000 employees. He said that DynCorp had denied any involvement in Al-Sammaraie's escape, and that the US had not seen any conclusive evidence of the company's involvement in the incident. Abdullah replied that an American company had taken Al-Sammaraie from the jail, and that he fled the country on an American plane. Abdullah acknowledged that Al-Sammaraie did not leave on a USG plane.

18. (C) The Charge emphasized the tremendous impact that barring DynCorp would have on MOJ, MOI, MOD and Higher Juridical Council training programs, and said it would greatly hamper mutual efforts to provide security and improve rule of law in Iraq. He noted that PM Maliki and President Bush had agreed to accelerate the transfer of security responsibilities in Iraq, based in part on capacity building programs run by DynCorp. Denying DynCorp employee entry visas would risk a delay in the timetable for security transfer, as well as a significant loss of momentum in the fight to reverse outside infiltration of the security and correction services. The Charge agreed that if the allegations proved to be true, DynCorp should be reprimanded. However he urged the PM continue to extend DynCorp employees entry visas until a full, fair, and rigorous investigation was complete.

19. (C) Abdullah listened intently, but stated that the PM would not be convinced until he had seen results of the investigation showing that DynCorp had not been involved. The Charge said that the Embassy would prepare a list of the

programs that would be affected by this policy so that the PM could understand the costs before making a final decision.

Abdullah and Al-Rikaby Ask for Assistance for US Trip

¶10. (C) Abdullah said that PM Maliki and President Bush had agreed to facilitate more regular contact between their staffs, in order to exchange views on issues and to cultivate a close working relationship similar to that between the US and Saudi Arabia. He lamented that the Iraqi Embassy in Washington wasn't capable of fostering better ties, noting that it wasn't a "real Embassy." As such, Abdullah asked on behalf of the Prime Minister that the Charge to help facilitate a US visit for himself and the PM Political Advisor Sadiq Al-Rikaby. He said the Prime Minister would like this visit to take place as soon as possible and, in particular, before the PM's visit to Japan on April 7. The Charge welcomed increased interaction between the PM's office and USG officials, and said he would relay the request to Washington.
SPECKHARD